

How good should the schools be?

Superintendent's Corner, from page 1

materials and services. Another 3.5% will be needed to accommodate the 253 new students who will be in our schools next year. An increase of 8% is needed to maintain our current level of services to children.

School Committee action to date has trimmed the budget request for FY03 by \$1,000,000. As a result, some staff members (especially aides) will lose their positions for next year. The reduction that the School Committee has already approved means that, as of this writing, the budget request for FY03 stands at 5.6% over the current year, or 2.4% less than we really need.

The alarming question is the potential need for the schools to absorb a bigger blow to its operations by cutting still more. Several hundred thousand dollars have been mentioned as the town looks to close the gap between resources and expenses. If the schools absorb a budget cut significantly greater than the \$1,000,000 already agreed upon, everyone associated with the schools will notice the difference.

The alarming question is the potential need for the schools to absorb a bigger blow to its operations by cutting still more.

The question then becomes an issue that transcends the superintendent, the school committee, the town manager, the selectmen, and the Finance Committee. In the last analysis, how good the schools should be and what Shrewsbury will do in the face of such serious budget problems will be questions that the entire town must address. Stay close and wish us all well as we try to figure this out.

The Shrewsbury Public Schools, in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21st century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.

Shrewsbury School Journal

Communications Committee

The non-profit *Shrewsbury School Journal* is published three times a year and reaches every household in the diverse and growing town of Shrewsbury. It is published by the central office of the Shrewsbury Public Schools with the help and expertise of many citizens. The mission of the *Shrewsbury School Journal* is to provide an accurate source of information about our school system and the town in which we live. We hope to foster a community of continuous learners.

Anthony J. Bent
Superintendent

Patrick Collins
Director of Business Services

Dawna Alphonse
Project Coordinator

Nancy Hochstein
School Committee Member

A lifetime of serving education

JOAN BARRY
MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Roland S. Barth's book, *Improving Schools from Within*, talks about school "as a place where students discover and adults rediscover the joys, the difficulties and the satisfaction of learning." In her twenty-five years as an educator in the Shrewsbury Public Schools, Maryjo Moon has created a culture that reflects this point of view. The spirit of leadership put forth in this quotation reflects this point of view.

Maryjo Moon began her career in Shrewsbury as an elementary teacher at Spring Street School. During her tenure at the Middle School, Maryjo Moon took on many roles and excelled in each. She was a 5th Grade Learning Arts teacher, a team teacher, a curriculum specialist and an assistant principal. In 1995, Maryjo took on yet

another new and challenging role as principal of Coolidge School. Luckily for us, in 1999 she returned to the Middle School as principal and it is fitting that Maryjo will finish her professional career here. This brief history gives testimony to her versatility as an educator, her enthusiasm for change and challenge, and most importantly, to the positive connections she has made with a great number of students over the past 25 years in Shrewsbury.

As I began to write this article, I realized that the best source to capture true reflections on Maryjo as an educational leader, would be the students at SMS. A significant number of students have had Mrs. Moon as principal for 6-7 years and so, I gathered a group of boys and girls together and I asked them to share their personal memories of Mrs. Moon. One girl related her memory from second grade, "One Friday afternoon, Mrs. Moon had the entire Coolidge School stop and dance

the Macarena." They all agreed that it showed that she wanted them to "enjoy school, have fun and work hard." The students also reported, "Mrs. Moon got to know the person, not just the name. You could walk into her office and talk with her about a problem at anytime. Nobody was afraid to go into her office."

They also fondly remembered the warm atmosphere she created at the school. Students got to know more students at other grade levels through the pen pal and buddy programs that she arranged while at Coolidge. They commented they were not nervous about coming to the Middle School because, "We knew Mrs. Moon." These student reflections speak directly to Maryjo's success at creating a learning community where all were part of student and teacher academic success.

Mrs. Moon is a progressive, forward thinking educator and she has created a culture of lifelong learning for the SMS community. Under her direction and guidance, we have focused on raising the bar for all students to achieve at higher levels. She encouraged teachers to be knowledgeable and current in instructional practices. Mrs. Moon introduced Differentiated Instruction to the school and made it the focus of staff development during 2000/2001 school year. She advocated for additional student support services and added school adjustment counselors to the staff.

And with just a few months of her tenure left she continues to be a strong support and a rich resource for students and teachers alike. Maryjo brought a strong vision of what middle level education needs to be to provide success for the early adolescent. She has been quick to recognize important issues and has led us forward in meeting the everchanging needs in education.

Now, it is time to begin our preparation to say good bye and good luck to Mrs. Moon. She will say hello to the new adventures in life; an even better golf game, and a new home in Florida and more time to spoil her grandson, Hunter. We are grateful for all the wonderful contributions she has made to middle school level education here in Shrewsbury. The students' voices say it best, "We will always remember her excitement, enthusiasm and zest for learning," All the best, Mrs. Moon!

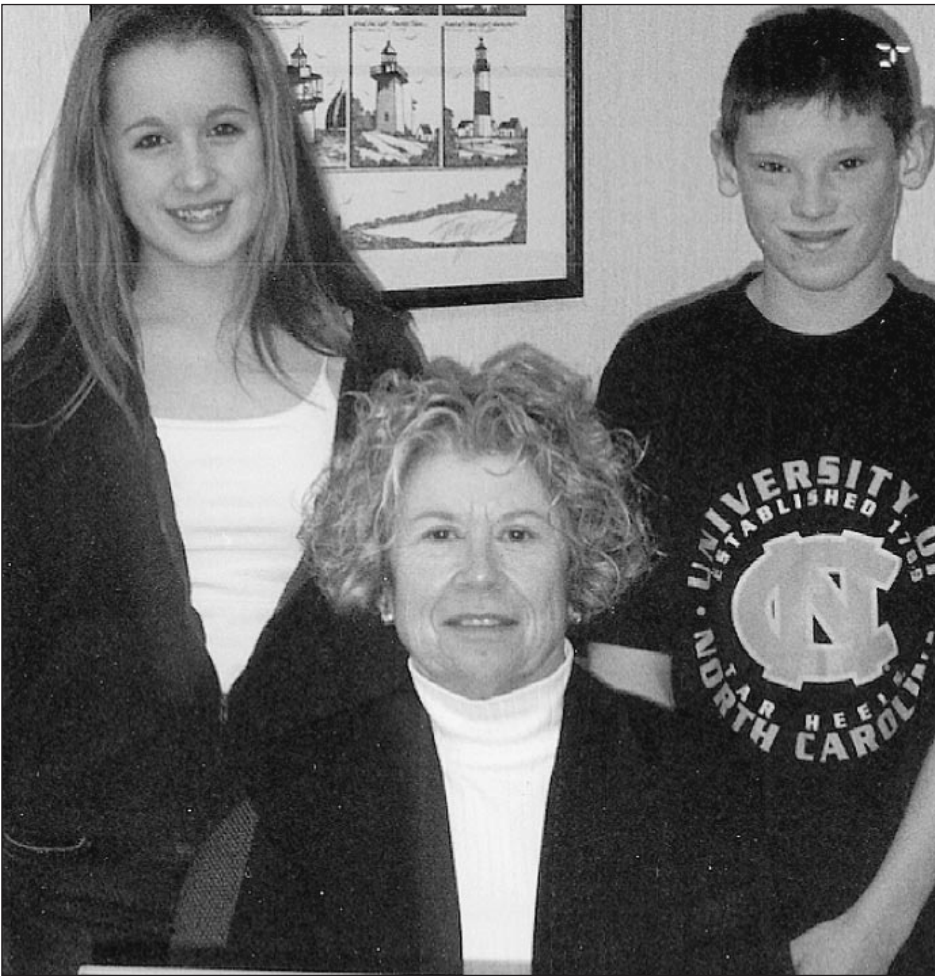


PHOTO BY DAWNA ALPHONSE

Eighth graders, Christina Trotto and A.J. Gonet have had Maryjo Moon as a principal throughout their school careers at Coolidge and the Middle School.

Budget faces significant cuts

FY03 Budget, from page 1

tions for our community and the quality of educational services we can provide our children. To date the School Committee has cut just over \$1M from its original plan of \$32.9M. This would be the lowest percentage increase in many years. (See table to the right.)

The approach in developing the \$1M cut plan was to protect core classroom services as much as possible. The district staff, parents, and students place a high value on reasonable teacher-student ratios. Many different areas of the budget plan were trimmed. Some of these are listed below:

- 19 instructional, general, and media aide positions were eliminated
- 10% reduction in hours for aides at Beal Early Childhood Center
- new Middle School Assistant Principal
- new Floral St. grade 3 teacher
- Coolidge grade 2 teacher
- advertising budget (\$5,000)
- 1 bus for Assabet Vocational High School
- High School athletics (\$4,500)

Despite the reductions already made in the School Department budget, the latest information noting a reduction in state aid means the Town of Shrewsbury (including the School Department) is now facing a budget deficit of approximately \$1.2M.

While we remain optimistic that the final State budget will ultimately fund education at a higher level (in June or July), Town Meeting must vote a bal-

anced budget plan on May 20th. Moreover, we know that additional cuts in the School Department budget will adversely impact the quality and quantity of programming, support services, and extra-curricular activities. As Dr. Bent has indicated throughout this budget process it is the community who will determine "how good the schools should be." Your input in this process is welcome.

Five Year History School Dept. Budget

Fiscal year	Operating Budget	Amount Increase	Percent increase
FY98	\$22,218,000	\$2,703,000	13.85%
FY99	\$24,302,620	\$2,084,620	9.38%
FY00	\$26,254,023	\$1,951,403	8.03%
FY01	\$27,900,000	\$1,645,977	6.23%
FY02	\$30,215,700	\$2,315,700	8.30%
*FY03	\$31,904,178	\$1,688,478	5.58%

* As of 26 April, 2002, this represents the FY03 School Committee budget. Its final budget vote will be on 15 May 2002.